

Libya closes southern borders amid mounting violence and unrest



The official [LANA news agency](#) in Libya announced 16 November, 2012 that Libya would be closing its southern borders with its four neighbors, Chad, Niger, Sudan, and Algeria. This development comes amid mounting violence and unrest. After a [regional tour](#) the week before, Prime Minister Ali Zeidan called for a meeting in Libya with the four bordering countries to discuss how to secure these regions. As well, the provinces of Ghadames, Ghat, Obari, al-Shati, Sabha, Murzuq and Kufra have been declared closed military zones.

Since the fall of Muammar Al-Qaddafi the south [has grown accustom](#) to a deteriorating security situation. Many tribes and clans are involved with [drug](#) and human trafficking, "turning the south into a mafia haven." Al-Qaida-linked rebels who control much of northern Mali have also caused a significant [immigrant flow](#) across the border to Libya. This problem is expected to get worse if there is an [international intervention](#). And earlier this month, 200 Libyan inmates escaped the [Sabha prison](#). It triggered Fezzan (southern Libyan) legislators to walk out on the General National Congress.

The Sabha General National Congress representative criticized elected officials' handling of the security situation in the south, saying the prison break was the "final straw." This decree to close borders can effectively be seen as a response to the prison break, as well as the other events in the south this past year. Although there has been skepticism on work of the new officials hailing from the revolution, it is positive to see them taking action. Also, willingness to work with other countries through diplomatic means is noteworthy.

On the other hand, what exactly it means to have a military zone in Libya is uncertain. It is known that the country lacks a unified and competent military apparatus to handle the security problems. Many are looking at this decree as an indicator of the instability of Libya as a whole. The vulnerability of the south reveals the inability of the government and its agencies to deal with both internal and external threats. We will have a better idea of the effectiveness of the decree if and when there is an intervention in Mali.